

Massachusetts Department of Children and Families



Preamble: The Department of Children and Families recognizes the following rights of children and youth in foster care. These rights are intended to guide the Department and its providers in the delivery of care and services to foster youth with the commitment to permanency, safety and well being. This Bill of Rights was developed by the Department's Youth Advisory Board.

Every Foster Child

Shall be treated with respect by DCF staff, foster parents and providers without regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion and/or disability.

Shall have family and relatives explored first as potential placement providers.

Shall have reasonable access to a caseworker who makes case plan decisions. Reasonable access shall include the social worker and supervisor's office telephone numbers and email addresses as well as, a minimum, monthly visits by social worker.

Shall participate in the development and review of the service plan and have input into changes to the plan that affect permanence, safety, stability or well being. Youth age 14 and older should also be presented with the service plan for their review and signature.

Shall be informed in a manner appropriate to age and level of understanding of the reason(s) the Department of Children and Families became involved with his/her family and why he/she is in care.

Shall be included in the Foster Care Review meeting, Permanency Hearing and Lead Agency Team meeting if age 14 and older, unless documented by court order or service plan that participation would be detrimental to the youth. If the youth is unable to attend in person, he/she shall have the right to submit a written statement to be considered at the meeting.

Shall be provided with information about a foster family or program and, whenever possible, shall have an opportunity to meet the foster parent or program staff before placement occurs.

Shall live with a family and in placement settings that provide a safe and nurturing environment while supporting permanency, and well being, including encouraging youth's goals, interests, social and school activities.

Shall have involvement as appropriate with family members and siblings and should participate in the development of visitation plans.

Shall receive support from social worker, foster family/provider in maintaining positive contact with significant people (relatives, teachers, friends and community supports) including assistance with contact information and visitation.

Shall be treated as a family member and, whenever possible, be included in a foster family's activities, holidays and rituals and be able to freely discuss reason(s) with social worker and foster family if choosing to not participate.

Shall have access to medical, dental, vision, mental and behavioral health services regularly and more often as needed.

Shall have access to information contained in medical, dental, and educational records held by DCF as well as personal documents such as social security card, birth certificate, green card, etc. When youth leave DCF, they shall be given copies of medical, dental and educational records held by DCF and original social security card, birth certificate, and green card.

Shall have the opportunity to have private conversations with social worker on a regular basis. Foster youth should also be made aware of the process for contacting the supervisor and attorney regarding any questions or concerns.

Shall be informed of the names and phone numbers of assigned attorneys and be aware that they can contact their attorneys and that there is a process to request a change of attorneys.

Shall have access to personal possessions, personal space and privacy with allowance for safety. Shall receive assistance in acquiring life skills, education, training and career guidance to accomplish personal goals and prepare for the future and be informed of the post-secondary educational and employment supports available to youth in care through the Department.

Shall be informed that DCF provides clothing, birthday and holiday payments to foster parents and placement providers for youth in placement.